

A nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* beside a temporal stream

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Un nid du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* à côté d'un cours d'eau temporaire. Le 12 décembre 2005, au pied du Mont Cameroun, nous avons levé un Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* adulte de son nid, situé à environ 2 m de hauteur dans le lit d'un cours d'eau asséché envahi par une végétation dense. Le nid contenait deux oisillons nus âgés de quelques jours. Le site se trouvait à environ 1 km de la route Limbe–Idenaou, à la lisière de la forêt et de plantations de palmiers à huile à environ *c.*190 m alt. Cette observation suggère que des cours d'eau asséchés peuvent constituer des sites de nidification convenant au Picatharte du Cameroun, qui normalement construit son nid sur des parois de grottes ou de rochers inclinés à l'intérieur de la forêt à canopée fermée.

Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* is a scarce to locally not uncommon resident in the forest zone, from south-east Nigeria and Bioko to Gabon and Congo-Brazzaville (Fry *et al.* 2000, Borrow & Demey 2001, Mamonekene & Bokandza-Paco 2006). It constructs its mud nest on cave walls or overhanging rocks within closed-canopy primary forest (Thompson & Fotso 1995), which may explain its localised occurrence. The species is known from the south-west slopes of Mt Cameroon (Tye 1987), an area with one of the most intact altitudinal gradients of tropical forest in West Africa. Breeding has been recorded in steep-sided bare rocky gorges in the upper parts of the forest, at *c.*700 m (Tye 1987).

In December 2005, we spent two days at the foot of Mt Cameroon near Batoke village (Mile 11). On 12 December we flushed an adult Grey-necked Picathartes from its nest within closed-canopy forest, just *c.*10 m from the edge. The nest was sited in a pool-like enlargement of a dry riverbed overgrown with dense vegetation (Figs. 1–2), but without vegetation immediately around it. It was attached to a vertical rock face *c.*2 m above ground and sheltered by a small overhang. Although the nest was relatively conspicuous close to, it proved hard to see from a distance. The nest contained two featherless chicks just a few days old. Having taken photographs, we left the site immediately to prevent the nest being abandoned.



Figure 1. Nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* in dry riverbed at the foot of Mt Cameroon, 12 December 2005 (David Hořák)

Nid du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* dans un cours d'eau asséché au pied du Mont Cameroun, 12 décembre 2005 (David Hořák)



Figure 2. Environs of the nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas*, Mt Cameroon, 12 December 2005 (David Hořák)

Environs du nid du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas*, Mont Cameroun, 12 décembre 2005 (David Hořák)

Concealed by nearby vegetation, we observed the adult return within a few minutes. The site is at c.190 m, c.1 km from the main Limbe–Idenao road and c.50 m from an oil-palm plantation, where local people were constructing a dam on the stream (04°04'N 09°04'E). It was c.5 km from the dry stony riverbed with steep rocky cliffs where a Grey-necked Picathartes was observed in January 2004 (Sedláček *et al.* 2005).

Although Grey-necked Picathartes is reported also to nest on cliffs below dry 'waterfalls' (Fry *et al.* 2000), nesting on the bank of a temporal stream has apparently not been documented previously. It has, however, been reported for its congener, White-necked Picathartes *P. gymnocephalus*, which has been found to nest alone on banks of watercourses when large, dry, rocky overhangs are absent (Allport 1991). Our record, and the sighting in January 2004, suggest that the banks of temporal streams may constitute suitable breeding sites in the dry season. Although picathartes are reported usually to breed in small colonies (Borrow & Demey 2001), we did not find any other nests in the vicinity. Colonial breeding may be the result of suitable breeding sites such as steep-sided rocks in closed-canopy forest being spatially restricted, whereas this is not the case for dry riverbeds. Our finding also supports the assumption that *P. oreas* tolerates a certain amount of human disturbance.

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